

PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS:

Goddard's new programs promote nice play

By: Christine Mawhinney Lark, Correspondent



It seems as though kids aren't playing nice anymore.

Against that backdrop, the child development experts at the Goddard School have adopted two new programs into their curriculum to help children learn how to play nicely and have fun.

Sports Mix is an age-appropriate program for young athletes, and The Goddard Guide to Getting Along, provides a foundation of courtesy and respect.

According to the information released by Goddard School, parents, coaches, and educators have witnessed a radical decline in children's understanding of sportsmanship.

The Goddard School wants to know if children can be encouraged to play with intensity, strive to be the best, and persevere without producing intolerable behavior. As more children are involved in organized sports at a younger age, it's apparent that learning good sportsmanship is as important as learning the skills of the game.

Rhonda Fleming, owner of the Royersford Goddard School uses the programs at her school. "I think personally that health, fitness and nutrition are things that we need to talk about," Fleming said. "The programs give teachers ideas to get the kids active."

Fleming noted that the teachers do games with the children, which are sometimes set to music, can be inside or outside and can be done with large or small groups.

"It is important to get them out and playing, and incorporate group activities," Fleming said. "They work on their large and small motor skills; they jump rope, do balance activities, and work on strength and endurance. They learn how to work as a team to achieve a goal."

The Sports Mix program introduces preschool, prekindergarten, and kindergarten children to organized sports including soccer, T-ball, lacrosse, field hockey and basketball.

The programs consist of detailed lessons to build teamwork skills, basic motor skills, and physical skills through active participation. The emphasis is on having fun playing organized team sports while learning appropriate terminologies and rules.

The Goddard Guide to Getting Along helps the children learn four essential skills: friendship, compassion, cooperation, and kindness through age-appropriate skill building. The manners program includes lessons on Stranger Danger, which teach children to recognize unsafe situations, react and respond appropriately, and differentiate between situations in which personal safety is more important than using good manners.

"Good habits start early, and that's why Goddard integrates learning physical skills, sport-specific concepts, and the benefits of positive sportsmanship into the program," said Lisa Fisher, marketing and public relations director for The Goddard School. "Our teachers use basic sports skills as well as school readiness skills, including taking turns, sharing, cooperation, spatial awareness, and listening skills."

At the Royersford location the teachers have noticed that the children really enjoy the activities from these programs. "The kids beg me to do the games, they have such fun with it," said Marian Kelley, kindergarten teacher at the Royersford Goddard School.

"I don't think it is ever too early to start a fitness and nutrition program for children," Fleming said. "I am very glad we are doing this and the children are having fun."